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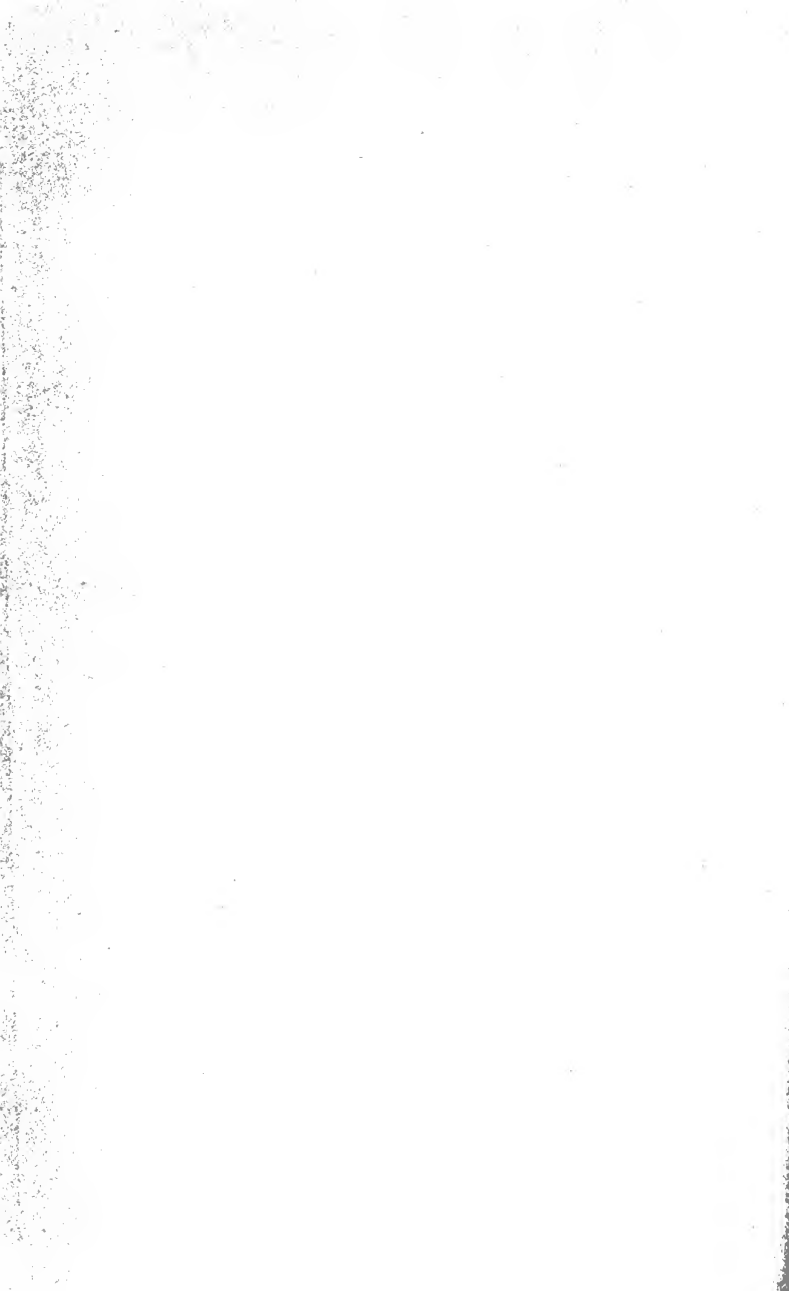
THE

DRAMA  
OF  
THE  
REIGN

W. B. SNOW.



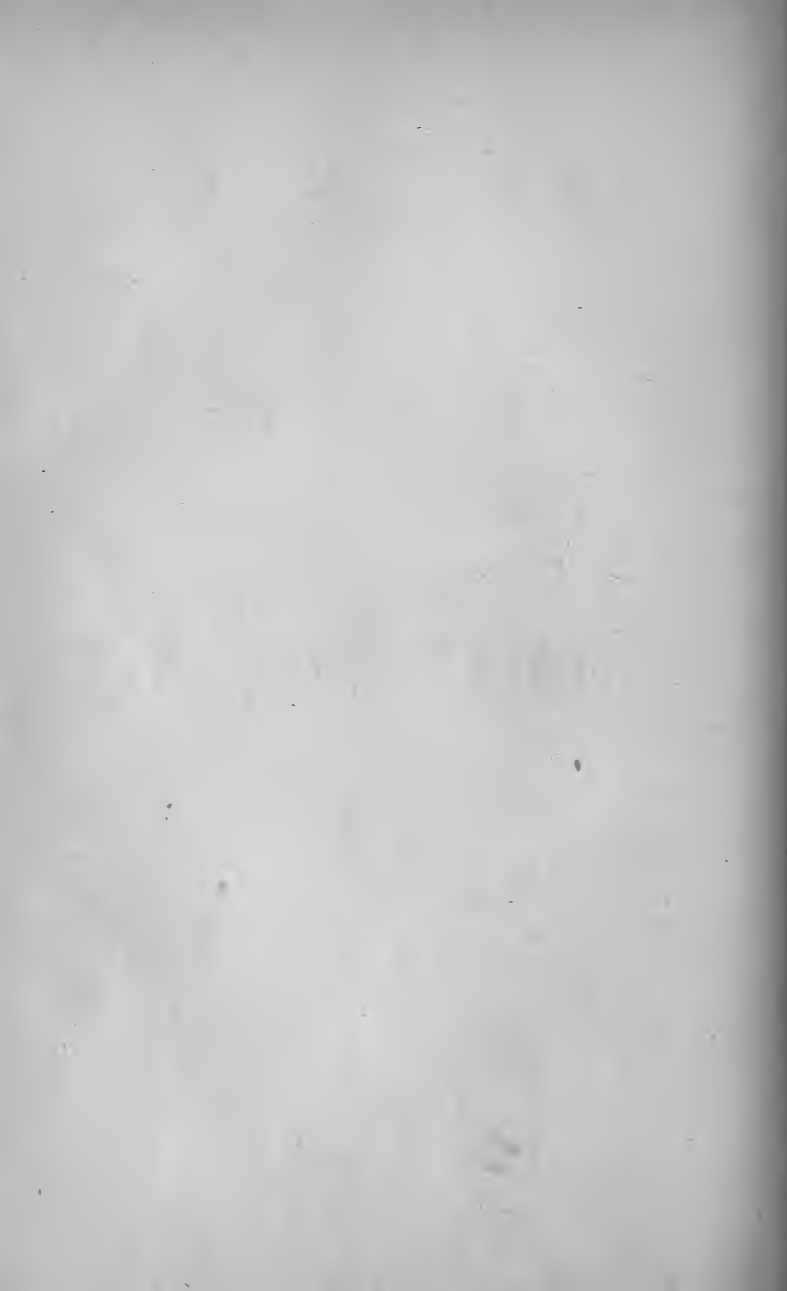
LONDON: JOHN CAMDEN HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.







THE DRAMA ON CRUTCHES.





# THE DRAMA

ON

## CRUTCHES.

*A Satire of the Day.*

BY

WM. R. SNOW,

AUTHOR OF "BRITANNIA'S BOX OF SOLDIERS."

LONDON :

*(For the Author)*

J. C. HOTTEN, 74 & 75, PICCADILLY.

1872.



TO THE  
AUDIENCES OF THE PERIOD

*These Lines*

ARE

PATHETICALLY INSCRIBED.



# T H E   D R A M A

ON

## CRUTCHES.

---

L ET Contemplation all her care be-  
stow,

To scan the Town from Shoreditch to  
Soho,

And wonder how (when 'tis so gravely  
said

That our poor DRAMA is completely  
dead)

Fresh ventures still seize ev'ry vacant  
space,

New Theatres, like ill weeds, grow  
a-pace,

And, strange anomaly! the self-same Age  
Runs up new buildings, and runs down  
the Stage.

The DRAMA dead, when mammoth  
type belies  
The fable of her premature demise ?  
Dead ? no ! for see how nude BURLESQUE  
can thrive,

And prove by kicking she is all alive !

True, of late years, a most unkindly  
Fate

Has frowned upon the old "*Legiti-  
mate,*"

And forced the Tragic Muse her grief  
to hide

In the dim purlieus of the Surrey side,  
And rant in exile. She has had her  
day :

Is somewhat *passée* : and she does not  
pay.

Poor worn-out beauty ! *she* has little  
chance,

Whose limbs are stiff, and skirts too long  
to dance ;

Unless her pride in self-defence were  
brought

Unworthy popularity to court,—

To fling her poison-cups, in juggler-  
fashion,—

Give in a Can - Can her unspoken  
passion,—

In pirouettes pourtray her one last  
hope,—

Walk in her sleep along the lofty rope,—

Sing her Revenge in idiotic rhyme,—

Swallow her dagger to conceal her  
crime,—



And gain a thousand bouquets, endless  
praise,

By a great Suicide from the Trapèze !

But on her palmy days the sun has  
set :

We turn the gas off : but who feels  
regret ?

The Grand Old Tragedy was vastly  
fine :

But still *that* Muse is only one of  
nine.

For such small loss the Public little  
care ;

They pay their money, and they go else-  
where.

In polished lines no merits now  
appear :

The DRAMA labours not to please the  
ear :

In dearth of talent, she must fain  
supply

The wherewithal to captivate the eye :

For glitter, legs, and colour, are to-  
day

Th' ingredients of the thing we call a  
Play.

Mere wealth of thought could please a  
former Age,

Though spoken on a meanly furnished  
Stage :

But now where is the hardihood that  
dares

Furnish the Palace with two Windsor  
chairs ?

What wit for gay retainers could  
atone,

Clad, each in garb peculiarly his own ?

Or where the reckless hero could you  
see

Cheered on to glory by his band of  
three ?

No modern bards on sterling verse  
presume,

For Sense plays second fiddle to Cos-  
tume ;

And Fashion, laying on pure ART no  
stress,

Merges all acting in display of dress.

Your modern Pegasus, all out of feather,  
Gives up his flights of Fancy altogether,  
And stumbles on, poor screw! be-spat-  
tered by

The trampled mud of Mediocrity ;

The Poet sinks down to the play-  
wright's grade,

(For what was once an Art is now a  
*trade*)

Doomed ev'ry truth of nature to forget,

Twist all events to suit some "*heavy*  
*set,*"

To be of Machinists the pliant tool,  
To own the Carpenter's exclusive rule,  
Cripple his Thought to meet the  
painter's views,  
Invoke the Gas-man, and disdain the  
Muse!

What though Incompetence your  
couplet mangles?  
The Stalls are eager to applaud the  
spangles.  
Lest dreary dialogue provoke complaint,  
Dazzle the Critic with display of paint!  
If plot be weak, construction all but  
*nil*,

Parade your chairs and tables in the  
Bill !

On rep and gilding lavish all your  
pains !

And find in wood the substitute for  
brains !

If startling incident your Acts re-  
quire,

Condone your dulness by a house on  
fire !

Your jaded intellect may well ignore  
The fact that so and so was done  
before.

Old friends are always welcome—known  
as true ones—

Whilst there is often doubt about the  
new ones—

Your vet'ran jokes are licensed : those  
that bear

Tradition's stamp are legal every-  
where.

Brush up your shreds and patches !  
though the Stage

May damn their value, it respects their  
Age.

Show to the Pit, with realistic pride,  
Some choice selections from their world  
outside !

Drive a *real* Hansom on the scene, and  
there

Pay him a *real* bad sixpence for his  
fare ;

Make the full House in one loud Bravo  
join

For injured Cabby and the spurious  
coin !

The greatest Dramatist is he who flings  
SENSATION'S halo round the meanest  
things.

In lighter Pieces introduce with tact  
Your Ballet to conclude the tedious  
Act.

For shapely limbs have most seductive  
power



To cause oblivion of the last half hour ;  
And, thanks to studied minimum of  
dress,  
The threatened *fiasco* is the GRAND SUCCESS !

But let no failure tempt your purse to  
shrink  
From free expenditure of Printer's ink !  
In daily Papers catch the Public eye !  
Re-iterate your ostentatious lie !  
For th' easy going worldling of to-day  
(Who has not strength of mind to damn  
a Play)  
Takes his opinions all at second-hand ;

Nor spurs his intellect to understand  
 How GENUINE TRIUMPHS may be won  
     *by aint*

*Of advertising in the largest print ;*

And grasps, poor easy man ! the prof-  
     fered chance

Of taking seats a twelvemonth in ad-  
     vance !

And, at the worst, your hopes may well  
     forestall

The barren honour of a certain '*call* :

That comfort is your due : although our  
     Time

Is pregnant with variety of crime,

The Age is so essentially polite

We keep our executions out of sight ;  
Disfavour ventures on no outward  
scorn,

And so your play is quietly withdrawn.

But such untoward fate can only be

The end of dullest mediocrity.

'Tis not in every mortal to excel :

Cheer up ! your nonsense will go down  
as well.

With trash macadamise the road to  
Fame !

Effective rubbish serves to win a name ;

And Fortune smiles on such incongruous  
stuff,

Provided only it be bad enough :

For *then*, let Critics carp, th' united  
Press

Abuse you, till abuse ensures Success !

Who seeks SENSATION ? let the novel's  
page

Be the unopened oyster of the STAGE :  
Nor think our natives only sure to please ;  
But dredge, by night, in continental seas :  
Season with British sauce : and few will  
tell

Whence came the oyster, if you hide the  
shell.

Learn then to slyly pluck with furtive  
care

The lurking buds of Genius, here and  
there.

For Wisdom reaps where Carelessness  
has sown,

And calls the choicest bouquet all *his*  
own,

Who had the happy chance at first to  
find it,

And feels no outlay but for thread to  
bind it.

'Tis yours to gather freely in your sport  
The stray ideas in unmown fields of  
Thought ;

Blend, happy labour ! with harmonious  
skill,

The stolen flow'rets at your own sweet  
will ;

Or, from your neighbour's orchard,  
shower down

Blossoms to hide your baldness with a  
crown !

Whate'er th' ingredients, you will not  
be wrong

In serving up your dish both hot and  
strong :

Most piquant morsels now our taste can  
bear :

The jaded appetite demands such fare.

Enthroned a sin : we'll hold you free from  
blame :

Make it attract : *there* lies your moral aim.  
But wrap your foulness in a fair outside ;  
And silk attire the cloven foot should  
hide ;

For Sin, in cotton, is but vulgar Vice :  
*That* points no moral, which does not  
entice.

The scene must be all glitter : for we  
scout

The thought how soon the gas will be  
turned out,

The brightness dimm'd by premature  
decay,

The dust, and broken spangles, swept  
away.

*There's* the true picture.    But who dare  
    proclaim

How false the jewels of attractive  
    SHAME ?

For know, this World of ours is not too  
    proud

To jostle noted Sirens in the crowd ;

And schooled by life-long study of the  
    nude,

Gives startled Innocence the name of  
    Prude ;

Wears Thais' livery ; with Aspasia's  
    paint

Bedaubs the sinner, and conceals the  
    saint ;



Till maids and matrons, by their dubious  
dress,

Assume the lack of virtue they possess.

Learn then the tempting bait such tastes  
to suit—

The crowd will nibble your forbidden  
fruit—

Such be your sermon: preach on, unper-  
plex'd!

And trust the Devil to supply your  
text!—

\* \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

A Muse on Crutches! 'Tis a sorry  
sight

To see the Drama in so sad a plight !  
 Drugg'd by the witching spell of fairy  
     bowers,  
 When tin foil and Dutch metal stand for  
     flowers ;  
 Where Dulness sneaks behind the mask  
     of FUN,  
 Or flaunts in lime light's artificial Sun ;  
 Where ART lies under an unseemly ban ;  
 The show appeals but to the baser man ;  
 Where airy nothings pass for full attire,  
 And th' only blush reflection of Red  
     Fire !  
 The ART's in danger.    Shall we haste  
     to seize,

And rout, each morbid symptom of  
disease ?

Or idly leave her in this sorest need  
To linger on, the chronic invalid ?  
Ignore her tottering ? nor feel despair,  
When e'en her Crutches are the worse  
for wear ?

SENSATION, who has made the pace too fast,  
Succumbs to bankruptcy of brain at last :  
BURLESQUE has hunted fairy tales to death,  
And danced her former spirit out of  
breath.

*Those props* are failing. Can we make  
them strong

By importation of exotic song ?

Cobble their rottenness ? or take advice  
From alien Doctors to effect a splice ?

O ye, her Patrons, ye, who can impart  
More healthy action to the limping ART  
With props and stays all sympathy dis-  
claim !

*Hi presto !* and the MUSE, no longer lame,  
Guiltless of Murder, Bigamy, or Pun,  
Throws down her Crutches, and enjoys  
a RUN !

THE END.

